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Reagan to Press Ahead With Plan to Provide Aid to Angola Rebels

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 10 — The Reagan Administration intends to tell the Congressional intelligence committees next month that it plans to provide \$15 million in covert aid for rebels fighting the Marxist Government of Angola, Administration and Congressional sources said today.

Administration officials said Secretary of State George P. Shultz had approved the aid proposal before he left on Monday for a 10-day trip to Europe. But it was uncertain when the assistance would actually start flowing to the rebels, known as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola and led by Jonas Savimbi.

The Congressional sources said senior members of the intelligence panels and the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees have been briefed over the last several weeks on the Administration's plans.

The Administration needs no approval from Congress to provide such aid and is required only to report its intentions to the intelligence committees, which may offer advice.

A Congressional source said he expected the issue to be "a very contentious one," particularly in the House. He said a number of Republicans as well as Democrats are uncomfortable with the idea of covert aid.

Although covert aid is rarely discussed in public, the Administration has made clear it was leaning in this direction. President Reagan himself, in an interview with editors and columnists last month after his return from the Geneva summit meeting, said his Administration favored the covert aid approach over the open economic and military assistance proposed by some members of Congress.

Since that time Mr. Shultz and other Administration officials have publicly expressed sympathy for Mr. Savimbi's rebel movement and its struggle against what the United States has called "Soviet-Cuban adventurism" in Angola.

The United States has estimated that there are about 27,000 Cuban combat troops in Angola and about 7,000 to 8,000 Cuban military trainers and advisers. A senior State Department official said today that the Angolan Government had received "something of the magnitude of \$2 billion over the past two

years" in Soviet weapons and matériel and that over 1,000 Soviet advisers were present in the country.

For a brief time after Portugal gave up control of Angola in 1975, the United States provided covert aid to Mr. Savimbi's forces. The Savimbi forces were engaged in a civil war with the Soviet and Cuban backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, the group that eventually came to power. In late 1975, however, Congress barred further aid to the Savimbi group, which has since gained control of an area in southeastern Angola that is adjacent to Namibia.

Last summer, Congress repealed the law barring aid to the rebels, and over the last several months the Administration has been involved in an intensive policy review on how best to assist Mr. Savimbi. According to some Congressional sources, Mr. Shultz is hoping to use the covert aid as leverage to obtain a negotiated settlement in the region that would lead to parallel withdrawals by the Cuban troops from Angola and by South Africa from Namibia, which it controls in defiance of a 1978 United Nations resolution.